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New York

President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral . . . . . (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by Dato' Seri Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia

The President: The Assembly will first hear a statement by the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Dato' Seri Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of Malaysia, His Excellency Dato' Seri Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mahathir (Malaysia): Let me first congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. I wish you a successful presidency. Appreciation is also due to your distinguished predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, who provided the leadership during the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

The General Assembly is meeting in the midst of hectic schedules of events to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. Some of us have become preoccupied with these celebrations. We should ask whether these activities are merely media events or could seriously contribute to a better United Nations. Will the high point of the fiftieth anniversary be reduced to a special commemorative meeting condensed into a declaration of good intentions which no one seriously cares for, or should we resist the tendency to celebrate, to expend millions on galas and parties and to eulogize through rhetorical speeches the anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations? After all we cannot even answer the basic questions of where we stand and what the United Nations is, whipping boy or serious, enduring player.

Admittedly it is easier to raise questions than to find answers. But these questions must be raised and they deserve to be answered. In its fiftieth year the United Nations system finds itself criticized for being unable to handle basic and critical political, economic and social issues. Despite earlier hopes of a just world order following the end of the cold war, what we still see is a United Nations which dances to the grating music of the major Powers, in total disregard for the high principles and objectives pledged at its formation. We will have to conclude that the narrow national interest of the few is still what the United Nations is all about. Also, the principle which largely moves the major Powers, that what they need for themselves must influence their dealings with the needs of others, is fully operative, making nonsense of interdependence, social compassion and justice.

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And so we must forget the promise of an international political leadership that can collectively come to grips with the myriad issues for a shared survival. Confrontation between States, intra-State conflicts, economic and military threats, the dehumanizing effects of poverty: all these are heightened rather than diminished by the end of the cold war. The contradictory impulses of interdependence and isolationism are more evident than ever before. Not only is humanitarianism drying up fast, but what survives is replete with conditionalities. The United Nations presents a shattered image with a threadbare moral authority, despite the important early successes in decolonization and the subsequent elimination of apartheid.

The victors of 1945 have clung tenaciously to the levers of power. They control the high ground, exercising influence and power as nakedly as when they were colonial Powers. Only the masks have changed. The multilateral organizations created on the eve of war's end were and still are structured to further their economic interests and the pursuit of their strategic political goals. The Security Council, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have merely become the instruments of power perpetuation. Less than six months ago, we witnessed the use of the United Nations to push through, draconian-like, the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty. Before the ink was dry, some of the nuclear Powers proceeded to test their diabolical weapons. What, may I ask, qualifies some countries to possess the means of mass destruction in perpetuity? It is time that the nuclear-weapon States committed themselves to nuclear disarmament through a programmed reduction of their nuclear arsenals within a specific time-frame, beginning with the immediate cessation of all nuclear tests and culminating in their total elimination. Soon it may be too costly and too late.

Perversely, the major Powers not only continue to compete in developing ever more destructive conventional weapons but also compete to sell arms. And when some developing countries buy arms the Western-controlled media accuse them of indulging in arms races.

We seem to have inherited a world in which moral considerations have no real role to play in which acts of *realpolitik* have no moral consequences. Tears appear to be shed about the human tragedies in Bosnia, Rwanda, Liberia, Somalia and Chechnya, but many have become desensitized to the horrors that flash across our screens. The Charter incorporating the idealism and dreams of 1945 is more honoured in violations of it than in adherence to it. Tell us: How have the principles of the Charter on the non-use of force and the illegality of claiming territory acquired by aggression been of help to the Bosnians? What protection or solace has the genocide Convention been to those slaughtered in Rwanda, Bosnia, Cambodia and Chechnya? The lesson for the peoples of these countries is clear: no international order or international ethos will be defended unless the major Powers see that their vital interests are at risk.

The United Nations has been party to the double talk in Bosnia, insisting that morality has no place in peace-keeping since the impartiality that peace-keepers had to maintain required them to eschew making any judgement about the rights and wrongs of the situation. I ask the United Nations whether there can be a middle ground where genocide and "ethnic cleansing" are concerned. I ask the Secretary-General of the United Nations whether he is obliged to defend the moral principles in the United Nations Charter or whether he should console the dying and the bereaved by saying that there are others elsewhere who are suffering worse fates.

Is there not, in the context of the larger picture, a special role for the United Nations to provide international leadership? Clearly the major Powers have failed to provide leadership, choosing only to act in furtherance of their national or domestic political interests. They continue to harp on human rights and the sanctity of human life but they act only when they run no risk.

Admittedly, blame must also be apportioned to many of us in the third world. Some of us have led our people down the path of despair and misery. With the demise of colonialism there was the promise of freedom and development. Yet many succumbed to the temptations of creature comfort, failing to further the rights and welfare of our own people. But then, when we were colonies, the only form of government we knew was authoritarian colonialism. It is too much to expect some of us, at the midnight flag-lowering, suddenly to become democratic and sophisticated.

The threat of a brutalized world has never been more evident than in the Serb programme of "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the massacres in Rwanda. For a long time the major Powers were opposed to taking strong measures against the Serbs. We are seeing belatedly some sense of purpose in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bombings and efforts to negotiate a solution. However, we should be cautious about rushing towards solutions that reward aggression and genocide. It is possible that some in the

West and in the United Nations had longed for Bosnia's quick defeat. It would have saved them from making any decision. But the Bosnians refused to oblige. In Rwanda the European troops withdrew when the massacres began. And in Somalia failure to understand the situation led to the victims fighting their United Nations saviours.

The United Nations Secretariat must take some of the blame for all these brutalities. In Rwanda it truly shirked its duty, while in Bosnia it sent in a protection force which was instructed not to protect the Bosnians. Why it should be called the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) has been a mystery until recently. It was there to protect itself. It makes a distinction between peace-keeping and peace-enforcement. If there is peace to keep, why are military forces needed? Are not the forces put there because of the possibility of breaches of the peace? And when there are breaches the forces must stop them, if peace-keeping is to be meaningful. But, instead, when peace is broken the United Nations threatens to withdraw and leave the victims to their fate.

Fortunately, in Palestine, another historical flash point, efforts continue to be made towards durable peace. That peace process must result in a Palestinian homeland, a viable State at peace with its neighbours. The attempts to weaken the present Palestinian leadership by undermining its credibility will only result in the rise of extremism and a protracted and bloody intra- Palestinian conflict which will spill over into Israel and elsewhere.

The absence of international leadership and commitment is evident in the area of development as well. The rhetoric of development is increasingly devoid of meaningful content. The North has turned its back on commitments relating to development assistance. Yet such is the concern for the survival of insects and plant life that human development must be stopped if it is suspected it might endanger a few animals or plants. That there are plenty of the same species elsewhere is considered irrelevant. And so one-fifth of the world's population remains mired in poverty, having been denied development assistance by the rich and the powerful. The latter have retreated into their regional clubs and cosy arrangements for perpetuating unconscionable levels of consumption. Some of the countries of the South have tried to pull themselves up literally by their bootstraps. But the moment they appear to succeed the carpet is pulled out from under their feet. Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) privileges are withdrawn and their records on human rights, democracy, and so on, are scrutinized in order to obstruct their progress.

Some among the more successful countries of the South have been enticed to join the rich and the strong, so they may not lend what little strength they have to their compatriots.

Commitment to the environment should not be turned into an occasion for recrimination and the pointing of fingers. Worse, it should not be politically instrumentalized to disadvantage the South. Development can take place without irreparable damage to the environment. Forcing the developing countries to remain undeveloped in order to preserve the environment for the rich is manifestly unfair. Yet the environmental obstacles placed in the way of the poor South will do just that, beggaring the poor to enrich the already rich.

Poverty itself creates an environment that is as damaging to humanity as any other kind of environmental pollution. Obviously, we need to determine our priorities. Do we keep the poor permanently poor so that the rich can enjoy the environment, or do we sacrifice the environment a little in the interest of relieving poverty?

We in Malaysia accept that economic development should not be at the expense of other groups or future generations. Environmental sustainability, social equity and a culture that allows for the fulfilment of human needs must replace the culture of materialism. The Western consumer society, which is spreading world wide, requires ever-increasing consumption to keep production and profits continually rising. For this, more fuel is needed, and the trend in the use of fossil fuels in recent years is alarming. Yet very little is being done to curb such wasteful use of a depleting resource, while the development of renewable resources, such as hydropower, meets with all kinds of objections. Progressively industrializing Malaysia has the capacity and the resources to design and implement a model of development sensitive to the needs and cultural values of developing countries without imitating the flawed Western model. We ask only that misguided crusaders should keep out. These modern-day imitations of the Communist agitators would do well to look to their own countries' wasteful consumption and carbon-dioxide emissions.

Social disintegration is a serious problem as the world's population becomes more urbanized. This is not helped by the West's seeking to impose its moral values. The institutions that hold society together are now being undermined. At the Beijing Women's Summit, despite a consensus cobbled together to alleviate the sufferings of

women, the mad quest for personal freedom took one more tradition-bashing step. People, it seems, cannot be free unless they have sexual freedom, a freedom that rejects the inhibitions of traditional and religious values, of marriage and family as institutions of society. Sexual freedom will render fidelity meaningless as much as it renders marriages anachronistic. The new liberalism extends to a new definition of the family, which is to include homosexual pairs, unmarried women with children by unknown fathers, groups of men and women living together with no fixed partners, and many other combinations.

If the West wants to be liberal and sexually free, that is its right. What is wrong is the attempt to impose its morality, or lack of it, on the rest of the world, and in Beijing that was what it tried to do. The United Nations should not lend itself to this kind of undemocratic disregard for the rights of others.

Of late there has been much talk about reform of the United Nations. Clearly, there is a need for this after 50 years of the United Nations carrying the tattered baggage of the last world war. Surely the results of that war cannot be reflected in the structure and procedures of the United Nations for ever. It has to end some time, and the fiftieth anniversary is as good a time as any for burying the relics of past follies.

Since democracy seems to have displaced religion as a faith, it is fitting that there should be democratic reforms in the United Nations. Some of those countries which had vested themselves with infallibility and permanency have now become second-raters. New players have emerged that should be accorded recognition. A more equitable representation on the Security Council is a must. This means that permanent seats should be given to regions, possibly determined by a regional mechanism.

The veto power should be dropped. Under no circumstances must the Security Council be made an instrument of any one country.

Reform must also extend to the financing of the United Nations. It is wholly unacceptable that Member States, especially the rich ones, should fall into arrears with impunity and yet exercise special rights and influence. The membership rules must be applied to one and all. New bases for assessment should be laid down, taking into consideration the wealth, or lack of it, of Members.

Various global taxation schemes, including modest levies on global air travel, a tax on global speculative flows of capital, a tax on the exploitation of mankind's common assets on the seabed and a tax on the trade in weapons of war, have all been proposed. Of those, the last one, based on the principle that he who profits from the tools of war must contribute to the maintenance of peace, merits urgent attention and adoption.

Reform of the United Nations also requires the cleansing of the bureaucratic Augean stables in the Secretariat. The morale of the international civil service is at its lowest ebb. The excesses and the fat must be trimmed, but failure to do so must not be used as an excuse for not paying dues or for opting out.

It is heartening to note that the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and other United Nations economic agencies have now acknowledged that linking trade and non-trade issues serves no useful purpose either for the developed or for the developing countries. Unemployment in the developed countries is due not to workers' in developing countries working hard to compensate for their lack of other competitive advantages, but, rather, to the profligate ways of the developed nations, with their high wages and unemployment benefits. Why it is assumed that workers in developed countries would work when they are to be paid for not working is a mystery on a par with the idea that people would be happy and productive if the diligent were paid as much as the indolent.

The reform of global institutions must encompass the Bretton Woods institutions. Their energies and resources must be channelled towards the battle against the pollution caused by poverty worldwide. The Bretton Woods institutions have to cease acting as debt collectors for the mighty and the rich bankers, who, in turn, must learn to live within the rules of their own creation, with regard to taking commercial risks which go hand in hand with the pursuit of gain. A return to their original mandates — to promote balanced development, in the case of the World Bank, and to enforce monetary and fiscal responsibility in all countries, irrespective of their status in the global economy — is a first priority. Reform must include a re-evaluation of the governance arrangements at the Bank and the Fund through a realignment and reallocation of quotas and shareholdings that take into account the changed structure of the world economy. New arrangements for governance must recognize the growing clout of the newly emerging economies that now contribute to a rising share of global output, to trade and to capital flows.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The debt millstone weighs heavily on the poor. This burden must be eased, especially for the poorest nations of Africa and Asia. Malaysia hopes that effective actions will be taken forthwith, taking into account decisions made at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly on finding a durable solution to the external-debt problem of developing countries.

While bilateral debts extended by donor countries have over the years been restructured and rescheduled — though with humiliating conditions imposed by the Paris Club of creditors — multilateral institutions, led by the World Bank, have steadfastly refused to consider restructuring debt owed to them. The World Bank continues to increase its profit levels and amasses reserves which today stand in excess of $16 billion. Why are these reserves, built from payments by developing countries, not used for debt relief? And why do we allow the intransigence of one or two countries to preclude the issuance of special drawing rights by the International Monetary Fund? These and other issues must feature in a reform of the Bretton Woods institutions.

The conclusion of the Uruguay Round and the establishment of the World Trade Organization offer a glimmer of hope for rule-based trading relationships. Malaysia applauds and welcomes the underlying principles, and we pledge ourselves to play by the mutually agreed undertakings.

Regrettably, powerful trading nations threaten, through unilateral actions, to undermine the carefully negotiated agreements. The deliberate creation of regional trading blocs, the introduction of managed trade and the attempts to link human rights, environmental considerations and labour codes to trade are major threats which, if implemented, would dim the hope of a free environment for trade. We reject such attempts. The new protectionism will return the world to a bygone era when trade wars led to military confrontations.

Finally, we have the new threats with the advent of the information age. The poor countries have long suffered from biased reporting by the world media, controlled by the developed world. Now the computer network created for the spread of knowledge and information has become polluted by the irresponsible dissemination of filth through it. Someone is making money from this filth.

The world community must find a way to keep out such filth and to provide for legal action to be taken against its purveyors by aggrieved countries, even when they broadcast from outside their borders. They should be allowed to bring these miscreants to trial in the aggrieved countries, under their laws. After all, we have already had many instances of extraterritorial application of the laws of some countries without so much as a by-your-leave.

Freedom of information is fine, but even in this age of freedom we cannot allow morals to be completely undermined in order to enrich the merchants of porn and filth.

When all is said and done, we still have to admit that the United Nations is the only truly multinational Organization where the voices of small nations can be heard. We support the United Nations, but we must correct the tendency to make it an instrument of the rich and the powerful. The United Nations must stand on the side of the collective needs of people and nations in order to serve all mankind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Malaysia for the statement he has just made.

Dato'Seri Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Chairman of the delegation of Uruguay, His Excellency Mr. Jorge Pérez-Otermin, on whom I now call.

Mr. Pérez-Otermin (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): In this changed world that came out of the Second World War — more global and interdependent — Uruguay wishes to reaffirm its confidence in the vital role played by the United Nations in the preservation of peace and in solving the main problems affecting the world, and it wishes to confirm the validity of the enlightened principles of the Charter, as sound today as they were 50 years ago.

During this period of time, Uruguay has brought the message of its people and its Government to this Assembly and to the peoples and the Governments of brotherly countries throughout the world. The content of that message has never varied: our conviction that international peace can be achieved only through strict observance of international law and resort to peaceful

means of resolving conflicts; our certainty that only a democratic system and scrupulous respect for human rights can ensure the full spiritual and material fulfilment of the individual; and our unfailing trust in this Organization, to whose creation Uruguay contributed half a century ago and to which we have given, and will continue to give, its broadest support.

Through all these years Uruguay has consistently held to those principles, contributing with its initiatives and its votes to consolidating peace and ensuring that law and justice take precedence over all else. We were the first to accept without any conditions whatsoever the mandatory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. We are a party to most instruments for the protection of human rights. We have contributed to peace-keeping operations since they first began, and Uruguay is the United Nations Member contributing the greatest number of contingents relative to its population and the size of its armed forces.

New realities and new international circumstances mark the post-cold-war world, and the United Nations has had to adapt its functions to the new demands, responding to external circumstances through an imaginative application of the Charter, which has kept the Organization alive and valid throughout its history and has saved it from obsolescence.

The international community today faces unprecedented situations. Ethnic and religious fundamentalism, international terrorism and drug trafficking may not be new phenomena, but they have taken on fearful dimensions by virtue of their access to powerful sources of financing and the use of weapons of mass destruction. This makes it necessary for the international community to organize itself efficiently to combat them, even on the battlefield of modern technology. In addition, these factors are combined with new political phenomena, such as the dismembering of multinational States, which has unleashed age-old ethnic and religious rivalries. These facts, together with the increase in the number of members of the Organization, most of them developing countries, and the lead roles played by certain States and regions, justify a reform of certain institutional aspects of the Organization.

All Charter reform or constitutional development resulting from established practice should tend to increase the effectiveness of the Organization, avoiding at all costs resorting to formulas which limit its response capacity or which enshrine new inequalities among its Members.

On previous occasions, Uruguay has spoken in favour of an expansion of the Security Council, seeking greater democratization in that organ, which is vital for the maintenance of balance and world peace. But the changes made must ensure that while achieving greater transparency and representativeness in that body, that do not have a negative impact on its functioning and efficiency.

In any event, the need to carry out institutional reforms should not lead us to blame the frustrations and failures of the Organization on the fact that the instruments for carrying out its tasks are not appropriate. Whenever the political will of States was used to resolve problems, the Organization was able to achieve its objectives without there being any need to change its structure or operation. Our efforts at reform, consequently, should not lead us away from our immediate duty, which is to face with our current means, imperfect though they may be, the serious conflicts which are affecting international peace.

We cannot but refer in the first instance to that which affects the countries that emerged from the former Yugoslavia. It has been hard for some of the parties to understand that while a negotiated solution is difficult, a military solution is impossible.

In the meantime, the civilian population continues to suffer through the years — a population which has become a permanent target of military action and the victim of brutal manifestations of racial intolerance. Behind this tragedy, and to a certain extent explaining it, lies the sad realization that United Nations resolutions are not being complied with by some of the parties. We believe that the Organization should step up its action, making maximum use of the political and legal mechanisms available to it under the Charter, to prevail upon Governments and authorities, directly or indirectly involved in the conflict, to respect and abide by decisions adopted.

There is no doubt that the road to peace may present extraordinary difficulties but it is never blocked entirely, as may be seen from the negotiations to put an end to the long and exhausting crisis in the Middle East. We must warmly congratulate those who have decided to replace weapons with constructive dialogue, and express our admiration for the intelligence with which these negotiations are being conducted, especially the persistence and inspiration with which the parties attempt to overcome, not only the extreme complexity of the

problem, but also, above all, the violent opposition which has tried to sabotage the peace process, resorting to the most cowardly and inhumane of means. The results are still far from satisfactory but they are also far from being negligible. The international community is also duty-bound to encourage these efforts. This General Assembly can contribute to this by avoiding including in its resolutions on this item language which may have been appropriate in the past, but which may be irritating at a time when a genuine spirit of peace prevails among all the authorities concerned.

The instruments for the second phase of the interim agreement on Palestinian self-rule has been another landmark in the peace process, which the parties in question have been promoting with great resolve. With the signing of this historic agreement in Washington, we can say that we are closer to lasting peace in that tormented region.

There is a common thread which runs throughout these conflict situations. It is an element which makes those situations possible and which worsens them, and that is the availability and sophistication of weapons. The international community will not be able to prevent breaches of the peace or avoid their far-reaching implications in terms of the loss of human lives and destruction, unless concrete measures are adopted with regard to regulation of the manufacture and traffic in weapons. It is our duty to revitalize the mechanisms which have been established to this end, and to create new negotiating bodies, were that to be necessary, to achieve concrete results.

Many developing countries, including Uruguay, a few months ago decided on the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a way of consolidating the process of progressive disarmament in this field. We did so in the conviction of the good faith of the nuclear Powers, which argued in favour of the extension. Unfortunately, after that, underground nuclear tests have continued by some Powers, which has led our countries to lose confidence in the instruments we signed, and has left us with a feeling of frustration and perplexity.

A few days ago in New York, concerned over the seriousness of the situation with regard to those tests, the countries signatories of the Treaty of Tlateloco in Latin America and the Caribbean and the countries signatories of the Treaty of Rarotonga in the South Pacific, which established nuclear-weapon-free zones, condemned this situation and reiterated the need to put an end to all types of nuclear tests so as to create a favourable climate for the conclusion of the comprehensive nuclear-test ban treaty, which is being negotiated at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

While the end of the cold war has reduced political tension and the risk of global confrontation, there are other developments today that are more insidious but no less threatening to the peace and well-being of nations, such as drug-trafficking and terrorism, and a lethal combination of the two. Uruguay, where fortunately we have not seen the worst manifestations of this problem, has taken part and intends to continue to participate intensively in the cooperative efforts to prevent and punish such acts and related crimes, in order to remedy their adverse effects and to attack their social consequences. We support the convening of an international conference on narcotic drugs to focus on a comprehensive approach to the problem, including the consumption, the production and the trafficking of drugs, related crimes and the social and economic aspects of the problem.

We are also undertaking maximum efforts to promote concrete national actions to counteract and fight against this problem, which could threaten our peaceful existence and the stability of our institutions.

On another subject, for some time now the factors which adversely affect the economic growth of developing countries have been identified and decried. Their nature and causes and effect have been examined, and formulas have been discussed and proposed to solve those problems, or at least to reduce the intolerable gaps which exist in today's economic world. After so many years of discussion, the overall picture remains unchanged, although mention could be made of some isolated cases where dynamic centres of development have emerged. The situation of the less advanced sectors of mankind, where poverty and resulting hunger prevail, where there is illness and illiteracy, this continues to be an unacceptable idea.

The process of globalization of the world economy and the economic opening that has been developing at the global level in recent years have helped us to modernize some of our production structures. Nevertheless, the instability of the world's financial markets poses a permanent threat to our economies. The transfer of major financial resources to and from our markets causes great instability in capital flows in the world, leading to concern and uncertainty, and threatens the accumulated

efforts of our peoples to establish a more just, more orderly and more stable economic system.

Given this situation, we need to find new mechanisms to create a more stable international financial system and a way to predict potential financial crises that do not impose regulations that hinder the capital flows needed for growth and investment.

The Group of Seven has pointed to the need to update the way in which the Bretton Woods Institutions operate in the financial sphere. Our countries are willing and entitled to participate in alternative strategies to reform these institutions that are vital to a world economy as globalized as it is today.

The establishment of the World Trade Organization marked the end of the longest and most complex negotiations of recent years and a new stage of international trade. If this new stage is going to lead to a more equitable distribution of international trade, all States, particularly those with the largest share in trade, must abide by the new rules of the game. Uruguay hopes that these rules will be respected, that protectionist policies and subsidies will disappear and that barriers impeding international trade liberalization and growth, especially trade in agricultural products, will be broken down, as agreed in Marrakesh at the conclusion of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

We recognize that as the international situation stands our development will largely depend on our own efforts. We attach great importance to international cooperation for development, but are aware that our problems will not disappear merely through external assistance. Today, the major challenge before us is the need to increase know-how and to apply it to development. Today, the only comparative advantages are those derived from scientific and technological progress, and a country's relative competitiveness will be directly linked to its ability to generate, adapt and apply its know-how and to provide permanent training for the population.

In this context, the countries of the Common Market of the South, known as MERCOSUR, are aware that according to the new world scheme integration processes are a fundamental aspect of an ability to compete efficiently with other economic blocs. We are promoting integration in the context of a philosophy of open regionalism. We are not trying to turn MERCOSUR into an ivory tower — quite the contrary, because as we strengthen and expand it we are trying to promote links with other countries of the region and looking for common ground while respecting the particular nature and modalities of each country.

We are also trying to strengthen ties with other areas of the developing world, in particular with our fellow countries of the South Atlantic region. In this context, Uruguay reaffirms the importance of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic that was solemnly declared pursuant to resolution 41/11 of 27 October 1986. In this framework, we fully share the aims of this declaration and see the zone as an important instrument for promoting cooperation in scientific, political, technical and cultural areas.

We are convinced that security and development are inseparable and interrelated, and that any progress in terms of meeting the objectives of the zone will strengthen cooperation between the States of Africa and of the Southern Cone of America. This commitment is all the more evident in the support given by the States of the zone for the peace processes in Angola and Liberia and the Bicesse and Abuja agreements respectively.

Unsolved global problems continue to weigh heavily on our agendas. There is general solidarity with regard to environmental protection, because we have clearly seen what is at stake, namely our common destiny, and have recognized that this is a task we must work at together. Unfortunately, this solidarity has still not been translated into concrete and effective action with a real ecological impact. The physical deterioration of the planet continues unabated.

Showing its concern for environmental matters and its willingness to cooperate effectively and tangibly with the joint efforts of the international community, the Government of Uruguay has offered to host the second meeting of the contracting parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held during the second half of 1996.

As a coastal country in the southern part of the planet, Uruguay is particularly sensitive to certain forms of environmental degradation such as the depletion of the ozone layer, climate change and the contamination and improper exploitation of the resources of the South Atlantic.

Uruguay views the results of the Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks as highly auspicious. We hope that the draft convention adopted will be approved in the near future and obtain

the ratifications needed to secure its entry into force, in particular by the countries most heavily involved in catching the fish covered by the convention. In this context, Uruguay expresses the hope that the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to which our country is a party, will be ratified as soon as possible by the countries that have not yet done so. The general application of the new law of the sea embodied in the Convention can only be of benefit to all States. The system of protection and preservation of the marine environment and conservation and exploitation of its resources are just two of the many benefits to be expected from its universal application.

In conclusion, Uruguay reiterates its opposition to the unilateral application by one State of economic or trading measures against another State and therefore urges that an end be put to the economic, trade and financial blockade of Cuba.

I wish to end by conveying the Government of Uruguay's pleasure to the President at his election to preside over the work of the General Assembly in the fiftieth anniversary year. We congratulate him on his eloquent address on the assumption of his post and share the views expressed therein. We are aware of the Organization's financial situation, but let us not make the mistake of thinking that savings should be made by cutting assistance and cooperation in the sphere of development, taking development in the broadest sense of the word. For every dollar we take away from this field, we shall have to spend two on peace-keeping operations.

If we wish to speak in economic terms, it is cheaper to prevent conflict than to have to resolve it later. Clearly, the primary responsibility of the United Nations is to resolve conflicts, but it is much more important to prevent and avoid them. Can a price be put on human life?

I wish to reiterate that Uruguay, faithful to its peace-loving and democratic tradition, will continue to participate in the task of building a world free from violence, poverty and intolerance — the world envisioned 50 years ago by the founders of this Organization.

The Acting President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, His Excellency Mr. Josef Zieleniec.

Mr. Zielenic (Czech Republic): Allow me at the outset to congratulate Mr. Freitas do Amaral on his election to the prestigious office of President of the General Assembly at this fiftieth session. His distinguished career in Portuguese politics serves as an assurance that his tenure will be very workmanlike and fruitful, in addition to celebratory. I wish also to thank the outgoing president, Ambassador Amara Essy, for the excellent job he did last year.

It is particularly auspicious to address the General Assembly this week — a day after the signing, in Washington, of a bulky, carefully crafted and long-argued-over agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the second stage of Palestinian autonomy; and a few days after the signing, here in New York, of a much slimmer, much more tentative and much more general set of additional principles for peace in the South Slav States, which, nevertheless, we hope, represents the next step towards peace in that area as well.

On 24 October, the United Nations will celebrate its jubilee. This indicates that the objectives and ideals of this Organization, as set out in the Charter, are still valid and still at the forefront of the interest of the international community. This fills us with joy, all the more so since one of the founding Members of the Organization was Czechoslovakia.

The founding of the United Nations was the logical outcome of the efforts of countries which, having been affected by the most terrible war in the history of mankind, wanted to ensure that a new organization would prevent any repetition of a similar conflagration.

Guaranteeing global peace, however, has never been the sole objective of the United Nations. The United Nations constitutes a unique forum for all countries, without distinction, to present their opinions and pursue their international interests in all areas of concern, including not only security and disarmament but also social and economic development, protection of the environment and other issues that are particularly pressing nowadays, including drug trafficking and terrorism. The United Nations thus offers a platform for solving global problems.

The United Nations efforts to implement the principles of its Charter enjoy the full support of the Czech Republic. Mr. Václav Havel, the President of the Czech Republic, will no doubt underline the importance we assign to it when he speaks from this rostrum next month. Nevertheless, in view of the changes that have taken place since the inception of the United Nations,

there is an urgent need to adapt the Organization to new challenges, to thoroughly reform it and to turn it into a better and more effective instrument of multilateral international relations.

The most important task is that of creating a more efficient and more cost-effective system. We need a practical system, one which, even with limited means, would guarantee global security, uphold human rights and contribute far more effectively to development in less privileged parts of the world. We need an Organization that, on the basis of the principle of universality, is open to all those who are willing and ready to participate in this endeavour.

The United Nations cannot spend a penny more on programmes that duplicate one another or on programmes that have become ineffective or even unnecessary. Many programmes can be consolidated, or indeed even eliminated, without any adverse effect on their beneficiaries. The message is clear: many of our national Governments are implementing cost-control and efficiency measures, and a similar approach must be taken by the United Nations as well. We recognize the important role that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) plays in the process of managing the United Nations finances and the importance of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, created last year. These organs must control United Nations expenditures even more strictly.

The Charter of the United Nations devolves the basic responsibility for maintaining international peace and security to the Security Council. In this role, the Council is irreplaceable. It is perceived as a compact, efficient, transparent and alert body that should guarantee rapid and effective United Nations action, wherever necessary, to maintain or restore peace anywhere in the world.

Although it is currently perhaps the most efficiently operating organ of the United Nations, there is room for improvement. The Council must put greater stress on preventive diplomacy, and it should further improve the flow of information between its members and other United Nations Members, as well as its cooperation with the Secretariat. Greater transparency of the Security Council in its decision-making would also be desirable. These are steps the Council can pursue by itself.

A broader issue is that of restructuring the Council, which requires our special attention. We support, and actively participate in, the Open-ended Working Group on the reform and restructuring of the Security Council, and we anticipate that the proposals that eventually emerge from it will actually be implemented. The number of permanent and non-permanent members of the Council should increase to about 20. Any substantially greater number would affect its effectiveness. It should, as far as possible, include representation by all regions, and the Group of Eastern European States should be allotted an additional seat. We oppose any new categories of Security Council members. Participation in maintaining world peace and meeting financial obligations to the United Nations are some of the criteria that should be considered in determining the expansion of the permanent membership. We believe Germany and Japan to be suitable candidates, and advocate expanded representation of Latin America, Africa and Asia.

Logically, non-permanent members, and small States in particular, cannot play the same role as permanent members with the veto. Nevertheless, non-permanent members have a positive role to play in the Council's activities and in its decision-making. During its current tenure on the Security Council, the Czech Republic has been contributing constructively to the Council's activities. Our own active policies demonstrate, on the one hand, the unmistakable place of the Czech Republic among traditionally democratic countries and, on the other hand, our independent analyses and attitudes, in which we are beholden to no other Power. Our Security Council activity has also demonstrated — if such a demonstration were indeed necessary — our commitment and involvement not only with respect to Europe, but also in seeking solutions in far-away conflicts which at first glance may not affect us.

The Czech Republic supports a more active role of the Security Council in various aspects of conflict management and in delving even deeper to the roots of conflicts. Such a role, exemplified for example in preventive diplomacy, aims at creating conditions and an atmosphere for parties in dispute to enter into serious and sincere negotiations, thus restoring stability and peace in the regions where tension prevails. When it comes to implementing the results of negotiations, active and complex peace building and peacemaking have been our primary vehicles. We do not share one-sided negative evaluations of the results of United Nations peace-keeping operations. In some regions normalcy has been restored precisely because of the United Nations and its peace-keeping activities. But there are also regions where tragedies unfold unchecked despite the United Nations

best efforts, including tremendous financial, material and personnel contributions.

In its extent, depth and consequences, the crisis in the former Yugoslavia amounts to the greatest and most tragic conflict in post-war Europe. The inability of Europe and of the international community in general to stop the conflict has undermined the confidence of the world public in a number of international institutions. Gaps in existing security arrangements have become apparent, and the European integration process has slowed down and became more complicated. The Balkan conflict is also frequently linked with the crisis of the United Nations and with the perceived need to create a more effective international security mechanism for resolving regional conflicts. In this strange way, the war in the former Yugoslavia might thus eventually assist in forming a new, more effective security mechanism.

It transpires that the international community was not ready for the conflict. It underestimated its complexity and its potential for escalation. Its length and its chronic character are linked with the military-strategic equality of the antagonists who, despite international pressure, have been refusing to negotiate. They believe, quite erroneously, that they can attain more of their objectives by fighting than by negotiating and signing a peace agreement. The latest developments indicate that it is impossible to attain any significant success in solving conflicts of this type without the determination of the international community and the combination of strong political pressure, sanctions and the appropriate use of military force. But it is still more obvious that a final, just and lasting solution can be attained only by peaceful negotiations.

The fate of the innocent civilian population lies at the heart of our concerns. The victims of ethnic cleansing, the still-concealed tragedy of the men and boys of Srebrenica and Zepa and the exodus of Croatian Serbs from their old homes all evoke fears for the fate of civilians. We should help monitor the observance of human rights for civilians on all sides of the conflict.

The United States initiative regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Croatia, amounts to an effort to create a joint peace project of Contact Group members and other interested parties. This effort should be fully supported by the international community and presented to the belligerent parties as the basic framework for solving the crisis. The de facto recognition of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and of the Srpska Republic by the Sarajevo Government, as well as the acceptance by Bosnian Serbs of the Contact Group plan dividing the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina in a 51:49 ratio, should certainly facilitate the next phase in peace negotiations.

The changing approach of the Serb party to peace initiatives of the international community, especially to the latest United States plan, confirms the more cooperative approach of Belgrade to finding a peaceful solution acceptable to all sides. This is definitely a positive. By the same token we supported the joint North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-United Nations operation, even though we realize that in and of themselves, air strikes would not resolve the conflict. Effective cooperation between the United Nations and NATO in implementing relevant Security Council resolutions has demonstrated that NATO has a very important role to play in the region.

Solving the problem of Eastern Slavonia should also be on the agenda of current peace efforts.

The Czech Republic is ready to continue its active participation in peace missions in the former Yugoslavia, whether under United Nations auspices or under some regional arrangement according to Chapter VIII of the Charter. Needless to say, the Czech Republic will continue to the best of its abilities to provide humanitarian assistance, and intends to participate in the post-war reconstruction of the war-ravaged areas.

There has been a great increase in the number of peace-keeping operations since the end of the cold war. In the last five years, more peace-keeping operations have been launched than during the entire previous existence of the United Nations. In 1995, 16 peace-keeping operations were functioning, compared to eight in 1988, with almost 70,000 personnel. Expenditures rose about five times.

This issue is inextricably connected with the critical financial situation of the United Nations. The United Nations is almost $4 billion in the red. The Czech Republic supports not only the reform of financing peace-keeping operations, but of the entire system of United Nations financing. The system should be based on economic indicators — per capita national product — and should correspond to a given country's ability to pay. Let me assure you that the Czech Republic takes its responsibility very seriously.

We are prepared to pay our fair share of the burden immediately and in full, as soon as this share is decided and we receive formal notification from the Secretary-General.

Czech authorities are right now drafting legislation which, if adopted, would create a legal framework for the Czech Republic's participation in the United Nations stand-by arrangements. The system should be as effective as possible. Similarly, initiatives aimed at the establishment of United Nations rapid-reaction units to be based on this system — including, for example, the recent Canadian proposals to this effect — have our understanding. Resolving all political, organizational and financial issues will take time, yet we feel that this is a promising way of addressing the critical question of getting peace-keeping operations started in time.

We hope very soon to become a party to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. We share the burden of peace-keeping operations by sending troops, military observers and other personnel, and therefore have a keen foreign-policy interest in strengthening their status and security.

Strengthening regimes of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is high on the agenda of the United Nations. It is our view, shaped by, among other things, the recent horrific discoveries of the United Nations Special Commission in Iraq, that the Security Council should play a more important role in this regard.

The unlimited extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty attained earlier this year in this very building is a success of truly historic importance. An important task is the preparation of an agreement on a complete and comprehensive ban of nuclear tests. We hope that the intensive negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva will reach a successful conclusion in 1996. And let me make one point: nuclear tests undertaken despite vocal protests from around the world do not contribute to the objective of global denuclearization.

The expectation of an early ratification of the 1993 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction has not yet been realized. Nevertheless, we hope that in 1996 the Convention will enter into force.

Existing regimes of export and import controls for dual-use material, equipment and technologies are also very useful. They complement or expand on international agreements, conventions and treaties concerning the banning, elimination and non-proliferation of weapons, especially those of mass destruction. I have in mind in particular activities of the so-called Australia Group, the Nuclear Suppliers' Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime and the emerging New Forum, the new multilateral arrangement on export controls.

The importance of the topics of this year's United Nations conferences, the Social Summit in Copenhagen and the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, attracted broad public attention — which, for that matter, was one of the objectives of their organizers. As we reflect on these conferences, evaluate their final documents and review the fate of the documents that emerged from earlier conferences, we are contemplating the very future of such meetings.

Notwithstanding all the expectations and enthusiasm that accompany them, we note the increasing disenchantment from the moment a conference is over and its conclusions are to be implemented. It then becomes obvious that large parts of its declarations fail the litmus test of practicality. One wonders: do the tremendous efforts and the very considerable outlays involved in organizing such activities really have the end effect we would all desire? We are not sure that we can answer in the affirmative.

The Czech Republic is a candidate for membership in the Economic and Social Council at this year's elections. The successes of our economic transformation have already proved to be of interest to other economies in transition. And they have allowed the Czech Republic to become an emerging donor country in the economic-assistance equation. These are some of the arguments I would submit to support our candidature. We of course realize that the Council is as badly in need of reform and streamlining as other segments of the United Nations body, and maybe more. We are prepared to offer our analytical skills in suggesting improvements and to support reasonable proposals leading to such reforms.

Allow to me say a few words from the perspective of another high office I currently hold, that of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The United Nations and the Council of Europe have a number of points in common. These common points should be further explored with a view to eliminating duplication even across organizations, economizing expenses and leveraging our resources.

Some ideas about cooperating in the triangle of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe have recently been shared in Strasbourg. I have full confidence that any ideas that are deemed useful will be further examined and implemented by our organizations.

The Czech Republic wishes to demonstrate its continued emphasis on multinational diplomacy and on assuming its proper role in the governance of world affairs. We have been doing so in the Security Council these past years; we do so by sending our troops, military observers and other personnel to far-flung corners of the world; and we do so by offering multilateral and bilateral assistance. Putting our shoulder to the wheel, we join others in moving this organization of ours into the next millennium and into its next 50 years.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister of External Affairs of India, His Excellency Mr. Pranab Mukherjee.

Mr. Mukherjee (India): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Mr. Freitas do Amaral on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, during which he will guide our discussions on what the future of the United Nations should be. May I also convey my thanks to the President of the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session, Mr. Amara Essy, who, as it were, tilled the ground which the new President will sow.

A fiftieth anniversary is a climacteric, usually joyous but not necessarily so. In ancient India, this was around the time in a man's life that he would be expected to withdraw into a forest, to spend the rest of his days in contemplation of past and future, it being the assessment of our ancestors that anything a man could usefully do he would have done by then. No such drastic measures are needed for the United Nations, not least because it has spent much of its first 50 years meditating in a concrete jungle. And the shadow of the woods of Bretton always loom over it. I do think, however, that as we celebrate, which we should, the survival of the United Nations, we should judge what it has done and what it now needs to do. The United Nations system has had remarkable success in helping to defeat colonialism and apartheid, on social issues like universal health care and women's rights, and in banning, through global, non-discriminatory treaties, two of the three weapons of mass destruction. These are considerable achievements. But a clear pattern emerges from them. Whenever the United Nations has acted on principle, responding to the felt needs and priorities of the majority of its membership, it has done well. When it has pursued narrow agendas or succumbed to special pleading, it has not.

If we were setting out tasks for the United Nations today, what would be the major trends and challenges we would expect it to address? The first is the international economy, transformed by global movements of trade, capital and labour; driven by forces which can break developing economies; regulated — if they can be at all — in forums outside the United Nations, which is therefore marginalized in this most momentous of contemporary developments. The second is an opening up of political systems, with democracy the norm of national governance. The United Nations welcomes this and urges the recalcitrant to change, but is itself sapped by undemocratic systems and institutions. The third is the scourge of war increasingly replaced by the scourge of terrorism, which, for the countries that sponsor it, is war by other means. The United Nations, set up to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, ignores it, as the League of Nations, to its fatal peril, ignored the threat of xenophobia.

These are complex and titanic forces. We, therefore, cannot accept, either as a statement of fact or as a basis of policy, the view that all this meant was that the days of absolute sovereignty were over. Sovereignty has never been absolute. Most Members of the United Nations joined immediately after emerging from colonial rule, with their economies destroyed, and dependent on foreign languages for communication, on imperial capitals for support and on donors for subsistence. This is hardly the stuff on which absolute sovereignty is built. It was, in fact, one of the great virtues of the United Nations that it gave fledgling nations space to exercise the sovereignty so cruelly circumscribed elsewhere. Therefore, the United Nations should not claim a unilateral right to intervene in the affairs of its Members. Sovereignty can be diluted only with the voluntary consent of nation States accepting obligations that are non-discriminatory or, in exceptional circumstances, where State authority has collapsed. Far from enfeebling sovereignty, it is the task of the United Nations to nurture it in a world that has made the powerful more dominant and the weak increasingly powerless. We must never forget that this Assembly is an assembly of our nations united. The United Nations rests on the commitment to it of sovereign nations.

There is clearly an enormous need for global action to deal with complex issues which have no territorial

limits or borders. This is the task of the United Nations. Developing countries which represent the majority of the United Nations, obviously want it to focus on the issues of most pressing concern to them. That is not only fair: that would be the democratic thing to do. For us, the single most important task is development, and we expect this to be the highest priority on the international agenda, as it is on our domestic agendas. Sadly, it is not. The Agenda for Development looks lamentably like an appendix. Can we, at this session, pledge ourselves to honour the commitments, freely negotiated but never implemented, which will make development possible in the South and make the world, for all of us, a better and more peaceful place?

It is just as important for the United Nations to have a say in the decisions that guide the international economy. Chapter IX of the Charter gave it the task to promote higher standards of living, solutions of international economic, social, health and related problems, and universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Like the United Nations, the World Trade Organization gives equal weight to the votes of all its members, but it would be a pity if the World Trade Organization cut even the tenuous links between the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the United Nations and, decided instead that global economic policies would in the future be coordinated between it, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, where the system of weighted voting makes the voice of the developing countries irrelevant. At the same time, several studies commissioned to coincide with this anniversary claim that the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) no longer has a useful purpose. This can either mean that the problems UNCTAD addresses — development strategies, poverty alleviation, resource transfers and debt, and the transfer of technology — have been settled, or are now irrelevant. Neither is true. These continue to be burning issues for developing countries, and if the United Nations chooses to ignore them it will not serve the needs of its Member States.

The United Nations must assume its Charter responsibility to supervise and coordinate global economic policies. In the World Trade Organization efforts have been made to link trade to environment and labour standards. The World Bank, in its World Development Report 1995, warns about

> "the proliferation of protectionist demands, many of them under the guise of demands for fair trade and a level playing field".

If, indeed, there is a genuine interest in protecting the environment and the interests of labour in developing countries, why are the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) being sidelined in this exercise? The answer must be that there is no provision in these bodies for the coercive, retaliatory action which would be available under the sanctions regime of the World Trade Organization.

However, the industrialized countries say that environmental and labour standards must be harmonized upwards, because otherwise transnational corporations would go where these standards were the lowest. This of course implies that transnational corporations have an appalling and exploitative standard of behaviour, but when, in the 1970s and 1980s, the United Nations tried to develop a code of conduct for transnational corporations, we were told that transnational corporations were models of virtue. How do these two views cohere?

The problem posed by these global economic forces is enormous. Trade is the oxygen of our economies, but cross-border trade between transnational corporations constitutes one third of world trade and almost 15 per cent of gross global product. No developing country, or group of developing countries, can match this commercial strength, augmented, of course, by the enormous weight of financial flows, which can make or break a country's financial structure.

The third element in the trinity of mobility in the international economy is migration. At present 125 million people live outside their countries, but more than half of them move between developing countries; this is not, therefore, as it has so often been misrepresented, only a problem for the developed world. It is disturbing, however, that those who insist on unfettered and truly global flows of capital and trade also insist on restrictions being placed on the movement of labour. Economic arguments are given to justify this, but there are also claims that large migrations disturb the way a society thinks of itself as a unified cultural or ethnic entity.

The President returned to the Chair.

It would be honest to recognize these fears as racist. India is a model of how these fears can be overcome. On

the one hand, over the past decade several million illegal immigrants have come into India. We know to our cost the political, economic and social strain this causes. However, we do not accept a racial basis for discriminating against legal migrants. We do not accept that nationhood is based on race, any more than it is based on religion or any other exclusive attribute. The waves of migration that have washed over India have made us a multi-ethnic society; we have been culturally enriched, not impoverished. We urge the international community not to let the forces of xenophobia rise again. Sovereignty has never been threatened by fresh blood freely welcomed; it has been threatened by the forces of racist intolerance.

This brings me naturally to the other force that now threatens the sovereignty of so many nations. Terrorism is the black plague of our times and it has been made more dangerous by the mystique with which the media has endowed it. It is argued sometimes that one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist. This is specious logic. In 1922 Mahatma Gandhi suspended for several years the freedom struggle in India because, in an incident in the small village of Chauri Chaura, a mob burnt some policemen to death. In Gandhi's view, the view of the ultimate freedom-fighter, the means must sanctify the ends.

What ends could possibly justify the barbarism of taking an innocent foreigner in India hostage and beheading him in cold blood? Foreign mercenaries did this to the Norwegian Hans Christian Ostro last month. An empire of terror is being built up with arms and money sent across borders; its foot soldiers are drawn from the bigoted, its leadership from ruthless, unprincipled men and, regrettably, some women.

At every summit in recent years, whether of the non-aligned, the Group of Seven, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), or the Commonwealth, Heads of State and Government have reaffirmed their resolve to defeat all forms of terrorism. However, in the United Nations, where we are all represented, we have been unable to speak in such forthright terms. We must do so at this fiftieth anniversary. To appease terrorism now will be as dangerous as appeasing xenophobia was in the 1930s and ultimately as destructive of both peace and democracy, because terrorism, as I said earlier, is war by other means. Whether it tries to violate the territorial integrity of a country, as in India, in our State of Jammu and Kashmir, or to unseat duly constituted Governments, as in Afghanistan, the acts of States sponsoring terrorism are, in fact, acts of war.

Democracies, as open societies, are particularly vulnerable to terrorism. The United Nations welcomes the global trend that has made democracy the norm of governance, but has done nothing to defend democracies from extremist and other threats. Instead, it comforts itself with the mantras that democracy is development, and democracies do not wage war. These neatly package all the world's problems and absolve the United Nations of any further responsibility: establish democracy everywhere and, automatically, development and peace will follow.

Both propositions are historically untrue. Democracies that developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries either suppressed democratic rights until they became rich, or grew rich on the ruthless exploitation of colonies. When they shed their empires after the Second World War democracy became development in Europe only in the uniquely generous embrace of the Marshall Plan. The myth that democracies do not wage war is destroyed by the history of colonial rule and its wars, leading to the conflagration of the First World War. The United Nations should, therefore, take these propositions as objectives, not as givens. Democracy should lead to development; democracies should be peaceful.

I want to touch briefly upon two other global issues which affect our lives — disarmament and human rights. After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Mahatma Gandhi said that the use of the atom bomb for the wholesale destruction of men, women and children was the most diabolical use of science. We were therefore appalled that, instead of stepping back from the road to nuclear ruin, the nuclear-weapon States sped faster and faster down it. As they accelerated, India tried unsuccessfully to put on the brakes. In 1954 we called for an end to nuclear testing. In 1965 we proposed principles for a non-proliferation treaty. In 1982 we called for a convention to ban the use of nuclear weapons and for an end to the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. In 1988 we proposed to the United Nations a comprehensive action plan for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Our goal — shared, I believe by most of us here — is a world from which nuclear weapons have been eliminated. The nuclear-weapon States claim to share this goal, but their present objective is to retain nuclear weapons while making sure others do not get them.

The logic of this is hard to understand. It cannot be argued that the security of a few countries depends on their having nuclear weapons and that that of the rest depends on their not having them. What makes the NPT such a pernicious document is that it legitimizes this illogicality, and now that it has been made permanent it has made the possession of nuclear weapons by the nuclear-weapon States immutable and has made the goal of global nuclear disarmament that much more difficult.

It is useful to recall that when India and other developing countries proposed the NPT, a global balance of responsibilities was envisaged. Those who did not have nuclear weapons would not seek to acquire them; those who had them would not try either to refine or develop them or to increase their arsenals. This balance was never honoured, with the result that 25 years after the signing of the NPT the world is a much more dangerous place, made so by the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the arsenals of the nuclear-weapon States.

I recall this background because two years ago the international community at last agreed to negotiate a comprehensive test-ban treaty. We are glad that negotiations are in progress, but we also note that nuclear-weapon States agreed to a comprehensive test-ban treaty only after acquiring the know-how to develop and refine their arsenals without the need for tests. In our view, the comprehensive test-ban treaty must be an integral step in the process of nuclear disarmament. Developing new warheads or refining existing ones after a comprehensive test-ban treaty is in place, using innovative technologies, would be as contrary to the spirit of the comprehensive test-ban treaty as the NPT is to the spirit of non-proliferation. The comprehensive test-ban treaty must contain a commitment binding on the international community, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to take further measures within an agreed time-frame towards the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The existence of nuclear weapons poses a threat to peace and security. Only global nuclear disarmament can guarantee that there will never be a nuclear war. Therefore, despite the unfortunate legitimization of nuclear weapons through the indefinite extension of the NPT, India will continue to work with like-minded countries for the early elimination of all nuclear weapons. We hope that at this session the Assembly will finalize dates for the fourth United Nations special session on disarmament, in 1997.

Human rights have always been a preoccupation of the United Nations, but their protection and promotion of such rights in each country is the primary responsibility of the government. The universality and interdependence of all human rights are also beyond question. That is precisely why the United Nations system cannot promote and protect human rights by a unilateral prioritization of individual freedoms or a proliferation of intrusive mechanisms, or by diverting funds from development activities to human rights activities. The priorities of nations will differ. The United Nations must balance the promotion of all human rights — civil, cultural, economic, political and social — preserve and propagate the values of every society and promote tolerance for diversity and cross-cultural interaction. Politicizing the human-rights agenda and using it to target countries is undesirable.

The United Nations will become responsive to these global issues and effective and efficient only if it also becomes more democratic in its functioning. Developing countries find it hard to identify with the agendas and priorities of the United Nations; they feel that it now represents the privilege of a few rather than the interests of the many. If the majority of its Members become disenchanted with it, what role can the United Nations effectively play? For the United Nations to be more effective, the General Assembly must be given new life and breathe that life into the other bodies of the system. The legitimacy and effectiveness of the Security Council must be enhanced. An expansion of both permanent and non-permanent members is a must if the Council is to become a truly representative body acting on behalf of the Members of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace and security.

The members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries have put forward a comprehensive proposal for the reform and restructuring of the Security Council. India believes that, to truly reflect the expanded membership of the United Nations, developing countries must be included as permanent members. New permanent members should be chosen not arbitrarily, but on objective criteria. In the League of Nations it was argued that one country had a special right of entry into the Supreme Council. When that was forced through, one or two of the other aspirants left the League, starting its decline. We should not repeat that tragedy. On objective criteria, some countries will clearly qualify for permanent membership. We believe India will be among them.

The United Nations has in recent years devoted itself almost exclusively to peace-keeping, which is important, but not the central issue of our times. It is

judged, naturally, by its record in these operations. There have been successes and failures, and both provide the reason and the need for introspection. India believes that United Nations peace-keeping operations must be based on the principles evolved over the last 50 years. Operations guided by these principles have usually done well. Where these have been abandoned, failure has been common. Over the past year this truth has gained broad acceptance, and the Special Committee on Peace-Keeping Operations is now trying to collate these principles. It would be desirable for the General Assembly at this fiftieth session to agree on them. India will contribute to this work.

India has consistently supported the peace-keeping activities of the United Nations. Indian troops have participated in all major peace-keeping operations, ranging from the Congo to Cambodia, Somalia and Mozambique. We are currently participating in United Nations peace-keeping operations in Rwanda, Angola, Haiti, Liberia and Kuwait. We have also offered a brigade of troops to the United Nations stand-by arrangement. India will continue to contribute to United Nations efforts to maintain international peace and security.

If the United Nations is to become a leading player on the world scene, it must be given the means needed to do the job we entrust to it. Clearly, setting out on a second 50 years with a crippling financial crisis is not the best way to do so. In India we make considerable efforts to pay our contributions promptly and in full. We believe that all Members must pay their assessed contributions in full and on time. Further, those in arrears must announce a schedule for settlement. There can be no progress in the on-going efforts for financial reform unless this is done.

The fiftieth session of the General Assembly is a historic one. It is our responsibility to rejuvenate the United Nations, give it the tasks we want it to do, and the means with which to do them. We set up the United Nations because we felt that all of us stood to gain from it. In the dark days of the cold war and in the friction between North and South, we seem to have lost this vision.

Since the inception of the United Nations, India has been committed to the principles and objectives of the Charter. In the last five decades we have played an important role in shaping the United Nations agenda, taking the lead on the crucial issues of decolonization, disarmament, human rights and environment, among others. On this historic occasion we pledge our continuing commitment to the United Nations efforts to chart a new course for the collective benefit of all humanity. As we attempt to do so, I am reminded of Jawaharlal Nehru's speech to the General Assembly in November 1948, in Paris. He said:

> "The objectives are clear; your aim is clear; and yet, in looking at that aim, we lose ourselves often, if I may venture to say so, in smaller matters and forget the main objective that we were looking at. Sometimes it seems that the objective itself gets a little clouded". *(Plenary Verbatim Records, Third Session, General Assembly, 154th meeting, p. 16)*

We must ensure that we set aside smaller matters, that we do not allow the objective to get clouded and that we move forward together in harmony and for the benefit of all the people of the world.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile, His Excellency Mr. José Miguel Insulza, on whom I now call.

Mr. Insulza (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Let me first convey to you, Sir, my delegation's and my own congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly. Your appointment to preside over the Assembly at such an important session constitutes a recognition not only of your personal abilities but also of the important international role that Portugal plays on the international stage.

As we commemorate half a century of the existence of the United Nations, we do so with renewed hopes for the purposes and principles of the Organization, and we wish to reaffirm our country's commitment to it.

The major processes taking place in the modern world have transcended national borders and taken strong root in the multilateral sphere. Like never before in the history of humankind, the solution of the problems of the peace and security of States and the people inhabiting them, as well as the protection of the individual, his welfare and his environment, depend more on collective decisions and action than on any one country. Our multilateral system may still have major defects and shortcomings, but there is no replacement that has the political legitimacy of the United Nations to take up the challenges facing us as we approach a new millennium.

Hence, it is important, during this session of the Assembly, to engage in a broad debate on the functioning of our system, in order both to adapt its objectives to the new realities and to introduce far-reaching changes in the

structures of the Organization, which were designed to meet the challenges of a post-war world that no longer exists.

My country aspires to occupy a seat in the Security Council as a non-permanent member in 1996 and 1997. From this rostrum I wish to express our gratitude for the unanimous endorsement we have received from the Latin American and Caribbean Group, as well as for the support to be provided by other countries of the United Nations in the election, which is to be conducted at this session of the General Assembly.

Chile is in a position to assume this responsibility and contribute to the search for the consensuses required to strengthen the Organization and make its decisions really effective. We shall do so on the basis of our principles of international policy, seeking always to reflect the views and interests of the region we wish to represent.

We believe that the primary objective of a security policy is to reduce the insecurity of the international community as a whole, of its Member States and of individuals, families and the communities in which they live. Helping to reduce these insecurities is the main task of the United Nations.

We are experiencing the combined effects of the ending of the cold war and of the process of increasing globalization. Both have positive consequences in the economic and political spheres, but at the same time they face us with new situations and uncertainties.

The fear of the nuclear destruction that might have resulted from the world-wide ideological confrontation between the major Powers has disappeared, and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to which Chile is now a party, has been indefinitely extended.

Nevertheless, the nuclear Powers and those aspiring to that status still do not acknowledge that the very existence of nuclear weapons capable of destroying mankind is a source of insecurity for us all. To believe that nuclear weapons confer greater security on the State that possesses them is an illusion. What they produce is profound unease in other nations and in the population of the nuclear-weapon State itself in the face of the possibility that the weapons, in an escalation of folly, might end up being used.

The renewal of nuclear tests by certain Powers — precisely at a time when, in the wake of the recent Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, there should have been a moratorium on such tests so that a definitive test-ban treaty could be prepared — shows insensitivity in this regard. Nevertheless, China and France, countries for which we profess respect and friendship, have opted to continue such tests. We condemn their attitude, and we see this as a clear setback for the cause of disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, which we all claim to share.

For Chile, France's decision to renew its nuclear tests on Mururoa Atoll, in the Pacific Ocean, is of particular concern. As a Pacific country and a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC), has categorically condemned those tests, and President Frei has made our opinion known to President Chirac.

We are concerned lest the South Pacific region, in which Chile has vital interests, should become a zone in which it is regarded as legitimate to engage in activities that are unthinkable in other parts of the world. We wish to state clearly our willingness to work together with other States of the region to prevent the proliferation, emplacement, transit or testing of nuclear weapons and other radioactive materials in that region and throughout the world.

On the other hand, we appreciate the positive attitude of those nuclear Powers that have declared and maintained unilateral moratoriums. Chile, along with other countries, believes that the General Assembly should take a stand on this issue in order to promote an immediate moratorium on all nuclear tests, as proposed by the Heads of State of the Rio Group and the States parties to the Treaties of Tlatelolco and Rarotonga at their recent meeting.

The end of the cold war has given rise to a genuine ideological decolonization that has opened the way for greater freedom and democracy in various regions of the world. Nevertheless, the hope that this change would lead to a more peaceful world has been thwarted. The new world disorder has encouraged the development of ethnic, religious, cultural or simply group differences. The former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Somalia remind us that hatred that still festers in various parts of our world.

People rightly look to the United Nations to bring its political and moral weight to bear in helping prevent such atrocities. Consent to barbarism in any part of the world weakens the moral fibre of all human beings. That is one

of the great lessons of the cold war; after the overthrow of fascism, the world also had an opportunity to expand democracy and freedom.

Nevertheless, the systematic abuse of human rights which tactical allies were allowed to engage in, and which also characterized the Soviet Union and its areas of influence, reduced the ethical quality of the world inherited after the ending of the cold war. What alarms us today was just yesterday promoted or consented to for "reasons of State".

Thus, the promotion of human rights, freedom and democracy cannot be seen as unwarranted interference in other people's affairs. There cannot be political, cultural, ethnic or religious reasons for trampling on human dignity. This is the core of the emerging international humanitarian law which Chile regards as a cornerstone of the world order for the twenty-first century.

In addition, the need to promote the security of the individual has recently acquired particular prominence. The main factors that today affect such security are unemployment, hunger, poverty, marginalization, crime and discrimination on grounds of class, sex, religion, culture or ethnic origin. People are demanding to be included in a process of development which affords opportunity, and asking that shared progress should ensure increased equality for all. Societies today are aware that social polarization is becoming their main source of uncertainty.

The world economy also recognizes this fact. As President Eduardo Frei has said:

> "We know today that there can be no stable investment in unstable societies, and that economic prosperity cannot prosper amidst human insecurity. On the contrary, it is becoming increasingly apparent that one of the main sources of growth and development for the future is, in all countries, the incorporation of today's marginalized people into the worldwide production system that is coming into being."

Heads of State and Government from all parts of the world ratified these views at the World Summit for Social Development, when they stated:

> "We acknowledge that the people of the world have shown in different ways an urgent need to address profound social problems, especially poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, that affect every country. It is our task to attack both their underlying and structural causes and their distressing consequences in order to reduce uncertainty and insecurity in the life of people." *(A/CONF.166/9, annex I to resolution 1, para. 2)*

The same problems stemming from the processes of globalization and internationalization have led to the emergence of a new set of problems relating to security. These include the corrosive influence of drug production and consumption, and the corrupting effect of the movements of vast amounts of money that this traffic involves; the degradation of the environment, from its global impact on the ozone layer to its local effect on the health of children and the elderly; the large international migrations resulting from insecurity in the countries of origin; the expansion of international terrorism; and the increase in transmissible diseases such as AIDS.

One immediate conclusion emerges: there is no substitute for the multilateral system to tackle this interrelated set of problems. The areas for purely national action are shrinking, while the need for international agreements and understandings is growing on a daily basis.

Another important conclusion is that to deal with this multifaceted constellation of problems, we need to make use of the United Nations system as a whole. If we want to resolve the problems of security, as they are experienced by people and as we have described them here, not only the Security Council, but also the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the specialized programmes and agencies have a vital role to play. We must give them greater responsibilities in relation to these issues.

In this context, I wish to outline a number of general principles by which our activity in the Security Council will be guided. We shall:

> First, focus on preventive diplomacy and on peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with Chapter VI in order to reduce to the minimum the use of force, in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter.

> Secondly, promote confidence-building measures and regional solutions based on the capacity for action of countries in the region; the regional option can be effective, as the case of Latin America is

demonstrating, and should precede and complement recourse to the Security Council.

Thirdly, always maintain a special concern for the victims of the conflicts dealt with by the Council, encouraging the fullest use of humanitarian law.

Fourthly, protect, in cases where sanctions have to be applied, the interests and needs of the most disadvantaged sectors of society; we do not believe in unilateral sanctions or in sanctions that ultimately hit only the weakest.

Fifthly, promote greater transparency in the procedures and decisions of the Council, so that the other States Members of the United Nations, civil society and public opinion at large can exercise democratic oversight over its actions; the more widely the complexities of the issues it deals with are known and understood, the greater the support for its work will be.

Sixthly, monitor the growing cost of peace-keeping operations with a view to rationalizing use of the available resources and making them more efficient.

We believe that one of the essential tasks for the United Nations in striving to attain the goal of increasing global stability is to promote the progressive establishment in various parts of the world of regional zones of peace and cooperation that is, geographical areas, defined by the participants themselves, in which are applied agreed rules for coexistence and the strengthening of peace and security.

The United Nations has already declared the Indian Ocean and the South Atlantic to be zones of peace. The same objective has been pursued by the Treaties of Tlatelolco and Rarotonga in relation to nuclear weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the South Pacific. We need to draw the main lessons from the benefits and limitations of the experience they afford.

It is important to stress that the ending of the cold war leaves the concept of a zone of peace devoid of any ideological implication and makes it possible to acknowledge its practical usefulness. The Government of Chile considers that many regions, including ours, are in a position to follow this example. We intend to request the Secretary-General to engage in consultations with the Governments of United Nations Member States regarding the interest in and possibilities of promoting zones of peace in various regions of the world and to report thereon to the General Assembly next year.

If we wish to make an effective response to the challenges we face, we need to improve the representativeness and efficiency of our Organization. This Assembly will also have to discuss important aspects relating to the reform of the system in these two directions.

Chile shares the view of many other countries regarding the need to restructure the Security Council to make it more representative. That entails bringing in as new permanent members countries which over the past 50 years have acquired much greater weight than they had when the Second World War ended.

The new realities of the international system have not affected only the developed world. Other regions have increased their influence in a world which — although "globalized" — is still extremely diverse.

While maintaining its capacity for rapid decision-making, which implies a small number of members, the Security Council needs to be expanded to take all these factors into account. That will mean making the present categories of membership more flexible, while always maintaining geographical balance.

Of course, we agree with all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean that any expansion of the Council should provide for an increase in the representation of our region, which in recent decades has acquired a greater international presence and has shown itself always ready to undertake responsibilities in the strengthening of international security.

Nevertheless, the reform needed in the United Nations goes far beyond the Security Council. Important reforms also remain to be carried out in the economic and social sphere, through which it will be possible to promote greater efficiency in the discharge of the major tasks of eliminating poverty, protecting the most disadvantaged social groups, creating employment, protecting the environment and strengthening free trade. In these and other areas, we also expect important initiatives from this Assembly.

Finally, the financial situation of the United Nations has been a cause of concern to us all. This situation is largely due to the many additional tasks the Organization has had to take on in recent times. But we share the idea

that, rather than endlessly increasing contributions, it is important to take up the urgent task of rationalizing expenditure and setting adequate priorities for our activities. We greatly value the initiatives the Secretary-General has been taking in this direction, and we assure him of our full support in his efforts to adapt our Organization to the new realities.

Over the past 10 years, Latin America has undergone far-reaching structural changes in the direction of democracy, respect for human rights and economic reform. Now we are also making an effort to attack the major problems of poverty and inequality that blight us, and to eliminate once and for all the scourges of drug trafficking and corruption.

Chile, as an integral part of the community of Latin America and the Caribbean, is a country of social peace and continuing development. Our economy has experienced sustained growth rates and our country is determined to consolidate the democratic process and attain justice and social equity.

As a country that is open to the world, we have expressed our readiness to assume in full the international responsibilities incumbent on us in the common task of bringing about peace, security and development. We are convinced that this Organization, which we helped to found fifty years ago, will continue to be the main multilateral vehicle for our proposals, our contributions and our dreams.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency, Mrs. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria.

Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner (Austria): It is with great pleasure that I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at this fiftieth session, at which we are commemorating the founding of the United Nations half a century ago. Your vast experience as a statesman and scholar is our assurance that this session will be crowned with success.

I wish to thank your distinguished predecessor, the Foreign Minister of Côte d'Ivoire, whose untiring efforts to stimulate the reform process in our world Organization deserve special gratitude.

Austria, a member of the European Union since 1 January 1995, fully endorses the comprehensive statement made on behalf of the Union by His Excellency Mr. Javier Solana Madariaga, the Spanish Foreign Minister.

The Austrian Federal Government is strongly committed to the objectives of the United Nations Charter and to the work of the Organization. The United Nations has traditionally been a priority of the Austrian foreign policy. Later this year, on 14 December, Austria will celebrate the 40th birthday of its admission to membership of the United Nations.

Last June, our Parliament held a commemorative session on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter at San Francisco. At that meeting, all political parties represented in Parliament praised the achievements of the United Nations, expressed their appreciation of the untiring efforts of the Secretary-General in the quest for peace, justice and development, and reaffirmed the commitment of Austria to a strong and vibrant United Nations.

Austria's strong commitment to the world Organization is reflected in Vienna's role as one of the Headquarters of the United Nations. The Federal Government and the City of Vienna lend maximum support to the United Nations Office as well as to the United Nations agencies and programmes based in our capital.

More than 36,000 Austrians have served as "blue helmets" in United Nations peace-keeping operations, some of them as force commanders. More than 30 of our countrymen have lost their lives in the service of peace. This dedication to peace-keeping led the Federal Government to organize the Vienna Seminar on Peacemaking and Peace-Keeping for the Next Century, which was opened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in March of this year. The report on this Conference was distributed this morning.

My country also attaches particular importance to civilian peace-keeping and sponsors a very successful training programme on civilian peace-keeping and peace-building. At the city of Schlaining, this programme prepares election observers, human rights observers and humanitarian affairs officers for their difficult tasks. Concrete proposals for improving the civilian components of United Nations field missions were formulated at the International Conference on the Preparation of Civilian Personnel of United Nations Field Missions. In addition, Austria makes concerted efforts to support the United Nations preventive diplomacy capabilities. The Austrian

Government will provide the Secretary-General with a list of personalities whose great experience will be at the disposal of the United Nations.

After the end of the cold war, new hopes were vested in the Security Council. The United Nations took decisive action in response to military aggression against a sovereign State and undertook successful multipurpose peace-keeping missions to resolve several long-standing conflicts.

At the same time, however, the international community and the Security Council were called upon to handle radically new situations. The United Nations had to respond to these new types of conflict with its traditional instruments: peace-keeping missions were deployed to keep a non-existent peace. As we all know, the United Nations missions in Somalia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina led to humiliation for the Organization and the international community.

With regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina there is at last some realistic hope that the renewed determination of the United Nations, combined with the decisive support of NATO, may bring about a durable settlement and - above all - put an end to the plight of millions of innocent victims, of whom the citizens of Sarajevo have become the symbol. Terminating the barbaric siege of the Bosnian capital, which has lasted since the spring of 1992, carries particular significance.

Austria fully supports the initiative undertaken by the United States, in the framework of the Contact Group, to reach a comprehensive peace agreement that will ensure the existence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia. We welcome the agreement on Basic Principles reached in New York earlier this week as an important further step on the long and difficult road to peace.

We remain deeply concerned about the fate of hundreds of thousands of refugees. Austria attaches the utmost importance to the rights of all refugees and displaced persons to freely return to their homes, as already stated by the London Conference of August 1992.

Let me equally stress how important it is for the future of the region that all crimes be brought to light and the culprits punished. In this context, the War Crimes Tribunal set up in The Hague can play a crucial role.

The efforts of the United Nations troops and their commanders, who constantly risk their lives for the cause of peace, deserve our admiration. I should like also to honour the memory of three of the main architects of the United States peace initiative who last August became victims of the siege of Sarajevo.

During that same month, the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Mr. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, resigned over what he called

> "the lack of consistency and courage displayed by the international community".

His relentless efforts in pointing out and documenting crimes against humanity committed in the war have earned him our highest respect. We welcome the continuation of this important task under the eminent leadership of Ms. Rehn.

A comprehensive settlement also needs to include satisfactory solutions for minorities, not only in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and in particular in Kosovo, Vojvodina and Sanjak.

The prospect of a well-coordinated contribution by the world community to the reconstruction of the devastated areas and to the relaunching of economic activities could help in facilitating the prospects for peace and its eventual consolidation.

Furthermore, Austria believes that regional arms-control measures will be another decisive factor in the effort to secure peace and should therefore be initiated as early as possible.

In the Middle East, long and arduous negotiations have now led to an important breakthrough. We applaud as a major step towards final peace and cooperation in the region yesterday's signing of the agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on the transfer of authority.

Today, the main threats to peace and security are no longer predominantly attacks by one country against another sovereign State. We are faced with conflicts originating in ethnic tensions, authoritarian rule, economic despair or migratory movements. Peace and security are therefore threatened not only by violations of the code of conduct among States, but increasingly by violations of international standards on the relationship

between citizens and their Governments and among different groups within countries. Our instruments for conflict resolution have to be adapted to these new circumstances.

Part of this effort has to be an enhanced early-warning capacity of the United Nations. The earlier the United Nations can attempt to mediate, the more likely are its missions to meet with success. By increasing the number of cases where preventive diplomacy can be used successfully — thus avoiding the need for military peace-keeping — an early-warning system would also be a great investment.

We also need to reinforce the capacity of the United Nations to assist Member States in their efforts to improve democratic structures, including the holding of free and fair elections, the full observance of human rights, the rights of minorities and fundamental freedoms, the strengthening of the rule of law, the fostering of popular participation and accountability of Governments, and the development of a prosperous civil society. Furthermore, the capacity of the United Nations needs to be strengthened in order to confront new threats to peace and security, such as organized crime and illicit trafficking in drugs.

Austria has always been strongly committed to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. We trust that the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) earlier this year will permit and encourage further substantial disarmament measures, in particular the early conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty. We are confident that negotiations on the treaty will be concluded next year and that the decision by one or more of the nuclear Powers to conduct additional nuclear-weapons tests — a decision that continues to cause deep concern in Austria — will not delay the conclusion of the negotiations.

In this context, allow me to reiterate the invitation of the Austrian Federal Government to establish the future comprehensive test-ban treaty organization in Vienna, and to express my gratitude for the widespread support this proposal has received and continues to receive.

The human rights agenda has for many years been dominated by the quest to establish international standards, culminating in the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The recent Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, strongly reaffirmed the central role of these documents in the struggle for human rights and their special significance in the context of the human rights of women. Today, we have to concentrate on the implementation of these standards. We must take all necessary measures to fulfil our international human rights obligations *vis-à-vis* our own peoples; we have to take a firm stand against human rights violations, wherever they occur; and we must assist Governments genuinely committed to improving the human rights situation in their countries.

The ever-more urgent question of minority rights needs to be an integral part of this agenda. In this context, I should like to mention that Austria and Italy together have arrived at an autonomous solution concerning the Austrian minority in South Tyrol, Italy, which could inspire other minorities and which is continuing to develop in a positive and dynamic way.

In order to implement the human rights agenda, we must better integrate the United Nations human rights programmes, under the leadership of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, into the mainstream of United Nations activities. Based on the lessons learned and experiences acquired within the United Nations system, we should further improve the instrument of on-site human rights monitoring. We firmly believe in the need to strengthen the United Nations programme of technical assistance in the field of human rights and the technical cooperation programme in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice.

Austria also welcomes the great efforts the United Nations system has made to cope with humanitarian crises. As a country that has received Bosnian refugees — who number approximately one per cent of the total Austrian population — Austria is particularly aware of the human dimensions of the refugee problem. Delivering humanitarian assistance, particularly in the field of major man-made catastrophes, has become an important challenge. The well-being of millions of people, be they in Rwanda, Somalia or Bosnia and Herzegovina, depends on this assistance and the selfless work of many specialized United Nations bodies and agencies, such as the High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme, UNICEF and the Department for Humanitarian Affairs. Many people owe their very survival to these organizations' activities. Through its contributions to the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), Austria shares in the support given to multilateral humanitarian programmes by their biggest donor, the European Union. My Government will do its utmost to enhance direct Austrian contributions to United Nations programmes as part of

our "burden sharing" in the field of multilateral humanitarian assistance.

Adapting the United Nations institutional structures to today's reality also requires reform of the Security Council. It needs to be enlarged by those Powers whose international influence has increased over the last 50 years. However, any enlargement of the Council must neither compromise its efficiency nor the opportunities of smaller countries to be represented in the Council.

In our intensive deliberations about the composition and procedures of the Council, we must not lose sight of its primary function. Security Council resolutions are effective only if they gain political relevance outside this building and if parties to a conflict abide by them. If Security Council resolutions are to facilitate political solutions of international crises, they must reflect the political will of Member States to implement them.

Austria welcomes the reform efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General in the area of management of the United Nations. We hope that these initiatives will be further pursued. We are pleased to see that the Office of Internal Oversight Services has become operational. We support the strengthening of this Office in order to further enhance stringent control mechanisms and thus increase Member States' confidence that the Organization is efficiently managed.

Above all, the United Nations has to be an organization in which problem-solving on all issues is closely monitored in an integrated manner. Coordination and cooperation among international organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) need to be increased.

In its fiftieth year, the United Nations is suffering from a chronic financial crisis that needs to be resolved urgently. A comprehensive and thorough reform is necessary. Member States must pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions.

Under the co-chairmanship of Austria, the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations has prepared the ground for agreement on comprehensive reform measures. A solution to the financial crisis will have to be based on the continued recognition of the special responsibility of the Permanent Members of the Security Council, as well as on a scale of assessment reflecting today's economic realities.

In the future, the United Nations system will need additional financing mechanisms for the funding of global priorities. A number of proposals have already been made, including minimal charges on foreign exchange transactions and charges to be levied on international airline travel. The point has been made that all these proposals require in-depth consideration by competent bodies. Austria therefore proposes that the General Assembly should decide on a comprehensive study to be undertaken by various components of the United Nations system in collaboration with outside experts in order to advance the international discussion on charges or taxes pertaining to such international transactions.

Negotiations on the crucial issue of reform are under way. Reform is possible only if Member States are truly committed to the Organization, which is and remains the only forum to address global issues. Let us use this historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly to commit ourselves to decisive reform in order to make our Organization fit for the challenges of the next century.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, Her Excellency Mrs. Susanna Agnelli.

Mrs. Agnelli (Italy): Mr President, let me congratulate you and your country, Portugal, on your election as President of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. At the same time, I wish to thank your distinguished predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy.

Italy fully supports the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain in his capacity as Chairman of the European Union, and wishes to add the following considerations.

The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations is an opportunity for us to reflect on the Organization's past achievements and future role. The fundamental challenge of the United Nations has always been the maintenance of international peace and security, to which Italy has contributed by participating in several peace-keeping operations, in which some of our young men have lost their lives. Our experience has convinced us that the United Nations should expand its role in the areas of preventive diplomacy, peace-keeping and peace building. The activity that has provoked more controversy in recent years, peace enforcement, must take place under the mandate of the Security Council, but the Council can

delegate such operations to coalitions of States or regional arrangements, thereby drawing on their valuable military expertise, particularly in matters of command and control, and preventing an overextension of United Nations resources.

The responsibility for peace-keeping operations must be shared by the international community as a whole, and thus they should be financed through assessed rather than voluntary contributions, to be calculated on the basis of consensus, and in accordance with international commitments.

In the former Yugoslavia, we have welcomed and constantly supported the diplomatic initiative undertaken by the United States Government and we sincerely hope that it marks the turning-point in the crisis.

The renewal of diplomatic action has thus far scored major achievements: the Geneva agreement of 8 September on basic principles for a settlement in Bosnia, the Framework for a Cessation of Hostilities within the Sarajevo Exclusion Zone signed by the Bosnian Serbs in Belgrade on 14 September, and the joint statement issued on 26 September. For the first time in three years, there seem to be real prospects for a viable and stable peace in Bosnia and we cannot afford to miss this opportunity. It is essential that Europe, the United States and Russia work together to overcome the remaining difficulties in the way of a general cease-fire and a peace agreement. We call upon all the parties concerned to come to the negotiating table, to show good faith and to resist the temptations to resort to military action to gain political advantages.

We should also prepare well in advance for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the former Yugoslavia by crafting an approach that would reaffirm respect for human rights and the rights of minorities and foster civil and cultural coexistence, development and welfare throughout the area.

In the Middle East and the Mediterranean, Italy applauds the determination and courage of Prime Minister Rabin, Foreign Minister Peres and Chairman Arafat in reaching yesterday's agreement on the second stage of self-government. Every effort should be made to implement it, starting with the holding of democratic elections in the Palestinian territories as soon as possible. Italy will continue its commitment to provide economic support to the Palestinian people.

Other situations in the Middle East give rise instead to tension and instability. We must contribute ideas and initiatives to efforts aimed at defusing these tensions and encouraging dialogue between opposing forces, except those whose programme and policy are violence. At the same time, Italy expects those countries trapped in self-inflicted isolation to engage in a constructive dialogue with the international community.

It is of the utmost urgency that an international conference be convened in the Great Lakes region of Africa under the sponsorship of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, with the goal of fostering the process of national reconciliation and allowing a rapid repatriation of the millions of refugees still living in camps.

But there have also been positive developments in Africa, such as the historic events of 1994 in South Africa, the reconstruction currently under way in Mozambique, the agreements that brought an end to the bloody conflict in Angola, and the political and constitutional developments in Ethiopia. My country's commitment did not stop at the participation of its military personnel in Mozambique. We also responded positively to the Secretary-General's request for military advisers to train de-mining personnel in Angola.

Latin America has made significant progress in the reaffirmation of democratic laws and respect for human rights. Italy supports the peace process in Guatemala and has sent a contingent to the United Nations human-rights monitoring Mission there, as it did to the peace-keeping operation in El Salvador.

The Asian continent is teaching all of us a lesson in realism, hard work and investment in human resources. Its growing force and economic success have brought it to the forefront of the community of nations.

Italy will actively participate in the new Working Group for the reform of the United Nations, paying special attention to the economic and social sectors, which need improvement and streamlining. While proceeding with determination, we must avoid hasty decisions in areas where caution and diligence should be the rule. We must keep our sights on results and effectiveness rather than on symbolic and artificially-imposed deadlines. This is true not only for the economic and social sectors, but also for the reform of the Security Council, which is already the subject of a detailed Italian proposal inspired by the principles of

democracy, equitable geographical representation and efficiency. It aims at reconciling the aspirations and interests of the greatest possible number of countries. Our goal is a Security Council with more non-permanent members that is able to express the feelings and political will of the international community as a whole. Only a Council that is truly representative of the entire United Nations membership and closely linked to the General Assembly can make this goal a reality.

However, if the financial crisis of the United Nations is not solved, budgetary problems could derail any reform proposals and send the entire system down the road to bankruptcy. The Secretary-General has repeatedly made this point, as has the President of the Council of the European Union. In the review of the scale of assessments, Italy hopes that the Member States will approve much-needed reforms, confirming beyond a shadow of a doubt their will fully and promptly to honour their financial obligations.

In some sectors of weapons of mass destruction, important limitations have been agreed on and implemented. As we recently learned, biological weapons, among the most horrifying arms known to man, are still in our midst. It is our wish that the prohibition of biological weapons be backed up by an effective system of verification.

As for nuclear weapons, the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons paves the way for new goals in the field of disarmament. The primary goal is the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty by 1996. It is imperative that we achieve an outright ban on all nuclear testing, and my country will do its part to see that this becomes a reality.

The Agenda for Development should be finalized by the end of the current session. The Agenda must reflect the conclusions and commitments made in the series of world conferences on the major social issues of our time, which will conclude with the World Conference on Food being hosted by Italy in the fall of 1996.

The growth of the economy and of employment is fundamental to international political stability in an era of interdependence. An effective form of coordination between the United Nations system and the financial institutions of Bretton Woods should be devised. Multilateral trade and the free flow of investments could enhance the spread of equitable and sustainable development. With regard to the persistent problem of the debt of developing countries, Italy ranks second among creditor countries in its reduction of the external debt of countries with grave economic difficulties.

The Italian Government is pleased with the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court and with the draft statute of the court prepared by the International Law Commission. Significantly, this draft explicitly does not include the death penalty among the sentences that can be handed down, in line with a position that Italy defended in this same Hall. My country hopes that the debate in the Sixth Committee will set the basis for convening a diplomatic conference in 1996 or 1997, which Italy has offered to host, to adopt the statute of the court.

The Italian Government believes that the United Nations should step up its efforts, as should its specialized agencies and international financial institutions, to channel more resources towards human-centred activity. Democracy and respect for human rights must become the hallmark of our efforts to build a better future for our children.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.